The Heartbeat of Women

The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights

Annual Report 2000

The Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights

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INTRODUCTION

This is the first annual report of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR). This report monitors and documents ECWR's activities throughout the last year, i.e. 2000, and is the first of a series of reports for subsequent publication. Since its establishment four years ago, ECWR has successfully completed a number of activities which have been compiled in this report for those concerned with women's issues. Given the publication of various reports on human rights' issues in Egypt, ECWR chose to direct all its attention to laywomen and to get closer to women's problems and concerns. This emanates from ECWR's strict stance that women's problems and concerns are part and parcel of the nations' problems and concerns. ECWR believes that its mission can only be accomplished through close contact with ordinary women in their everyday lives.

Since its establishment in 1997, the efforts of ECWR, through its team of lawyers and field researchers, have resulted in a step forward for women's rights, and a plan to put the problems of Egyptian women on the map of public work in Egypt.

ECWR started its work with a Project on Women's Legal Aid, having noticed that many women's rights are lost because of their ignorance of the law. The same applies even to educated women. The project started in Dar el Salam, a low-income area with a population of one million, 70% of whom suffer from very low economic and social standards. Having succeeded in the initial outreach to these women, the team was asked to focus on lighting dark districts, paving streets, introducing potable water and drainage to their houses and many other local services. The women thought that it was ECWR's duty to solve the problems of their daily lives since it provided them with free legal and judicial assistance.

Hence, ECWR's team developed and implemented programs to promote women's political rights and make women aware of their rights and duties.

Such programs included making women aware of the definition of society, the state and its role, the role of the executive bodies and political parties, using simplified concepts to enable them to understand what was happening around them. This is in addition to urging them towards political participation through their enrollment in electoral lists, voting in various elections, and creating women's electoral blocs that are capable of negotiating with whomever represents them to acquire their rights and their families' rights.

Through working on the Program of Support for Women's Political Rights that was primarily concerned with fieldwork, many women joined ECWR's team as volunteers. Those volunteers sought to urge other women to participate in ECWR's activities. Such women are natural leaders who already have the basic skills required for this task, although some of them are illiterate. All these women needed is that their skills be polished and that their knowledge be increased to best represent women at the level of local councils.

Thus, ECWR embarked on developing the Cadre School for Women Program. The idea of this program developed after the legislative elections were held in 1995. The latter revealed a sharp decline in women's political representation. The Cadre School for Women Program started training women's cadres to participate in elections according to their capabilities.

This program was entitled a 'school' as it offers a comprehensive curriculum to build enlightened political cadres capable of action and real participation. Throughout nine to twelve months, the same split group is given the educational and training curricula as per certain conditions and standards.

The fourth program is the Program of Access to Basic Services. This program aims at helping women to register themselves to obtain their personal and family identity cards, and birth certificates for their sons and daughters as a first step on the way towards claiming both their legal and political rights.

Finally, ECWR developed the program of Capacity Building of Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs). The idea of this program developed during the implementation of the Program of Access to Basic Services. ECWR noticed during the registration process, which was done through NGOs in various governorates, the readiness of many of these NGOs to engage in effective and serious work in society despite a lack of skills to undertake their assigned missions.

Outreach to women in Egypt began when the first non-governmental organization for services, "Mohammed Ali's Platform" was established by a small group of women in 1909. This was followed by women's struggle in the 1919 revolution during which the first women's organization was founded in Egypt. ECWR has been, and still is, reaching out to women in Egyptian society for the last four years. The year 2000 witnessed a breakthrough in ECWR's activities in comparison to the previous three years since the establishment of the center.

ECWR conducted 38 training courses in law throughout the last three years, whereas it conducted 28 training courses in law in 2000. ECWR filed 262 lawsuits to support women's rights in 2000 compared to 337 lawsuits by ECWR throughout the past three years. ECWR obtained 7064 official papers, including birth certificates, family and personal I.D.s and unregistered certificates, throughout the past three years, whereas it obtained 1500 official papers in 2000.

As regards publications, the ECWR has issued 23 publications throughout the last three years which brings the current total to 105000. Finally, 232 workshops, seminars and training sessions were organized in 2000 whereas in past years a total of 103 were held.

ECWR believes that figures are important indicators, however they are not enough to evaluate the work and measure its effectiveness. Thus, this report endeavors to review the effect different programs have had on changing lives in Egypt. ECWR hopes that this report will receive much attention and criticism to help it develop its work and redress its mistakes.

1. PROGRAM OF WOMEN'S LEGAL AID

The idea of women's legal aid is the first brick upon which the pillars of ECWR were founded. The Program of Women's Legal Aid was the first of ECWR's programs. It was directed in the beginning at Dar el Salam, and in particular at women of low economic and educational standards. The program aimed to promote women's legal status before the police authorities and the judiciary.

ECWR first implemented its program in the popular area of Dar el Salam and here attempted to interpret the behavior of Egyptian society in terms of its treatment of women's issues. ECWR also attempted to expose discriminatory cultures in society and the effect of habits and traditions on shaping awareness and how this is reflected in the way society deals with women's rights.

The implementation of this program coincided with the transition of the economic system to the market economy, a development which has negatively affected women's rights. For example, girls' chances to be sent to school decreased as family income decreased with the severe economic straits afflicting many families. Consequently, parents preferred to send males only to school. This is on top of the scarcity of job opportunities available to women. This is also evident in the phenomenon of Egyptian women's marriages to rich men from the Gulf area as an opportunity to obtain a higher standard of living. Such marriages created many legal problems regarding the documentation of the marriage, and also in cases of the husband abandoning his wife and children, and the wives' subsequent pursuit of their husbands to seek divorce.

In light of the above-mentioned assessment, the program aimed at achieving the following:

1. Creating an awareness of women's rights as part and parcel of human rights and disseminating the idea that strong women are women who can

be relied upon and who can defend their rights and others' rights.

2. Monitoring violations and violence against women whether by individuals or by society as a whole.
3. Breaking the psychological barrier for women when obtaining their rights through legitimate channels.

To achieve such goals, the program adopted three main themes:

a) Legal training



Training targets intermediary sources of information such as teachers of literacy classes and NGO health and urban workers. This is meant to improve the level of general awareness in society, disseminate values of equality and human rights and enable women to read laws critically and discern discriminatory policies within them. This is in addition to spreading awareness of values of freedom on a large scale.

This is put into practice through skills acquisition, discussions on relevant issues, and the expression of all related positive and negative viewpoints, which are then collectively analyzed and linked to values of justice and equality. This is further supplemented by practical exercises on certain issues and dividing male and female participants into working groups to arrive at just solutions that are consistent with the spirit of international law and human rights instruments.

As regards training, the Program of Women's Legal Aid focused on legal interactions in issues relevant to women's laws such as the personal

status laws, nationality laws and laws on inheritance. The program also included other elements such as laws that fall outside the scope of personal status law but further aggravate women's problems in society such as the check law which highlights how dangerous it can be for women to sign an uncovered check, which can subsequently be altered, whilst buying durable goods. Such a phenomenon is wide-spread in popular areas where women have been sentenced to jail. The program also covers other laws like lease laws and other daily problems which women are exposed to in society.



The program endeavors to cover a number of basic skills including communication skills. This aims to enable the participants to effectively transmit the information they acquire to others.



As previously mentioned, the program was first conducted in Dar el-Salam, Cairo and was limited to the inhabitants of the area. ECWR subsequently expanded the program's activities to include Greater Cairo and some other governorates.

In this respect, 28 training courses were conducted in 2000 to raise legal awareness. They were attended by 700 male and female participants.

The number of male participants amounted to 180 compared to 520 businesswomen. Such courses were held in cooperation with 21 NGOs. The activities of such NGOs varied from providing services, literacy classes, sponsoring orphans and the handicapped to activities relevant to health and the environment, women's rights and development of local communities. Furthermore, ECWR cooperated with the General Authority for Adults Education and the staff of the Ministry of Social Affairs inside and outside Cairo.



These organizations are as follows:

1. Female literacy teachers	Oseem
2. Female urban social workers	Ain Shams
3. Female social workers	Giza
4. Women's Club in Mataria	Mataria
5. Female literacy teachers	Dar el Salam
6. Female health workers	Embaba
7. Women's Society of Al Hanaa	Mataria
8. Female urban social workers	El Sayedda Zeinab
9. Society of Egypt's Youth	Menia
10. Society of Development of the Local Community	Bab El Sheeria
11. The Arab Center for Creativity and Development	Mokkattam
12. Society of Development of the Local Community	Mataria

13. Development of the Community Society	Menoufia
14. Development of Families	Aswan
15. Female students of General Service	Cairo
16. Requirements of Social Affairs	El Sayedda Zeinab
17. Female literacy teachers	Oseem
18. Women's Club	Ain Shams
19. Female urban social workers	El Warraq

b) Provision of Legal and Judicial Assistance

Legal and judicial assistance in police stations, different offices of prosecution and court halls are watchdog mechanisms through which the Program of Women's Legal Aid seeks to break the psychological barrier between women and such bodies where women are involved in the legal process. Women resort to the help of ECWR suffering from their problems and from depression and desperation because they have lost their legal rights and cannot afford lawyers' expenses. ECWR's team of lawyers started to help these women, not by providing services but by involving women themselves in the legal proceedings to restore their self-confidence. Lawyers took women to the appropriate agencies so they became acquainted with such places and overcame the barrier of fear. Lawyers charged women with acquiring some documents themselves to enable them to get to know the proceedings. Though this placed a heavy burden on lawyers, it helped to achieve the ultimate aim of the program. The



team noticed that some women became very enthusiastic to the extent that they decided to continue their lawsuits on their own with the consultation of ECWR's lawyers.



In 2000, the program of Women's Legal Aid adopted 261 legal cases, 62 of which are alimony cases, 12 of which are cases of repayment for fostering children, 25 detention cases for freezing alimony, 24 cases to receive the postponed part of the dowry, 15 cases of tutelage and annulling tutelage, 42 divorce cases, 8 khole (the wife requesting divorce against paying a sum of money to the husband), 7 cases of challenging the return of the wife to the husband's home by force of law, 13 cases of disobedience and violation of marital duties, 9 cases for issuing rubber checks, 5 cases of wife battery in addition to 13 civil cases and 3 probate cases. Other cases included Tort, breach of trust and appeals.

ECWR also adopted around 150 cases of women in the field of social insurance and civil affairs. Furthermore, ECWR provided 1500 legal consultations for women with various legal problems and other issues. The case of Mrs. Sayeda Mahmoud is one of the cases where ECWR helped women solve their problems and better progress in their lives.



Sayeda Mahmoud Bayoumy was born in 1969 in Ousim (in the North Giza govornorate). She is one of a family of 10 - 3 brothers, 5 sisters, her father, who is a seed merchant, and her mother, who had chosen to stay at home to look after her family. She is the youngest of her sisters and brothers. Her mother died when Sayeda was two years old, and thereafter she was raised by her brothers and her stepmother.

Because of their number, her father did not care to educate the girls who have all gotten married. Her brothers were lucky to receive some education, and they now hold various jobs; the eldest brother is an employee at the Ministry of Social Affairs, the second works at a company for milk products and her third brother is an office employee at the Ministry of Agriculture. Because Sayeda is the youngest in her family, she was fortunate enough to be educated to diploma level, graduating from the Commercial School in 1988.



About her childhood, she says, "When my mother died I was two years old, my father remarried and my brothers continued to look after me in the tough way which they believe is the best way to raise girls." She adds, "When I was young, my brothers used to beat me which is common in rural areas.

"After graduation, I held a job (for 4 years) at an institution for driving training which is under the Giza Department of Traffic. I met my husband when I was 21 years old. After 4 months of engagement, I realized that he was so stingy, he didn't even care if I was sick, he was so greedy for my salary. He used to asked me for money for many things, even to buy the golden wedding gift…so, I decided to break the engagement. However, my family refused to allow this due to tradition, and to prevent any rumors

spreading.

"When I amicably asked him to break our engagement and offered him money in compensation, he refused to accept. Furthermore, his mother quarreled with my family and said that I was undermining the authority of my brothers and ignoring their role in the family!

"Consequently, my family insisted we sign the marriage contract as soon as possible, and we went through with this. I kept insisting on getting divorced, but his family persisted with their stubborn attitude, and he threatened to send me an obedience notice [a legal document requiring a wife to return to her husband]. He used to treat me badly and would take my money alleging that he needed it to furnish our house."

Sayeda continues " If a woman continues paying for everything, she will find herself even paying for a smile."

"In light of such disputes, my fiancé and my family insisted that I leave my job in order for them to keep an eye on me and to imprison me at home.

"After two years of disputes, the wedding was fixed, I was 23 years of age and I agreed purely to escape from my imprisonment. I got married on January 14 1993, as a result of their pressure, and nothing at all to do with my feelings.

"On the day, he did not pay for anything that a groom should pay for, such as hairdressing or photography. Moreover, he told me, "What shall I do, I have no money, shall I go home and cancel the wedding?"

"On the second day of our marriage, my husband went to the post office to inquire about my account there, which was only L.E 30. He shouted at me, "Is that all you've saved after so many years of work?" I lived with him in the same building as his mother and sisters and had no independence. I was obliged to eat all my meals and spend the whole day at his mother's house, and to go to my apartment just to sleep. When I was hungry, I found nothing to eat at my apartment. His family's interference in our life increased further; they used to humiliate me, especially when I did not get pregnant. Even after I got pregnant the problems did not stop. My husband refused

to support me, he even tried to force me to go to my family for support, but I insisted on continuing my marital life. He used to beat me while I was pregnant, which caused me to bleed. I eventually moved to my family's apartment for a year, without any financial support from him either for me or for the son I gave birth to, and he made no attempt to ask about us. I felt unable to live with him any longer so I took my furniture from his house to my father's house.

"When my son was six months old, I started working for two hours a day training girls in sewing skills, earning a monthly salary of L.E 120. When my husband found out he asked me to go back to him and my family again insisted I do so. For my son's sake and because of customs and traditions which do not encourage women to be divorced, I accepted, and resumed my marital life.

"I attempted to increase my income by purchasing a second-hand sewing machine and worked on it for a few hours in the morning, and in the afternoons I would go to the workshop to train girls in sewing. My husband again started to ask for my money and if I refused, he started his beatings and humiliation. This situation lasted for a long time, to the extent that he celebrated his son's birthday at his mother's home and prohibited me from joining them." "On this day", Sayeda says, "I felt very humiliated and depressed, but I chose to be patient, for the sake of my son's happiness, and to smile on his birthday."

"When I kept refusing to give my husband any money, he decided to sell the sewing machine I had bought and take the money, and he also forbade me to go to work or any other place. I obeyed him so that my son would be raised by his parents.

"While I was pregnant for the second time, I felt so tired I wanted to visit a doctor, but he wouldn't let me. He beat me and kicked me out of the house without my son. At the police station, I tried to insist on filing a report against him, to prove the harm he had caused me, but my family refused to allow this in order to avoid a scandal. Then, I again moved back with my family.

"After a few weeks, I began work as a teacher for adults at a civil organization and this proved successful. After I gave birth to my second child (a daughter) I left work to look after the new baby. Throughout this period, he did not ask about me or even try to divorce me. He decided to leave me this way to increase my suffering.

"Through my work as a teacher for adults, I heard about the 'Egyptian Center for Women's Rights', I found out about the programs and services they provide to women, such as those helping them to obtain birth certificates or I.Ds. I visited the center to find out about the nature of the services offered to women. As soon as I heard about their legal aid program for women, I asked them to file a divorce lawsuit."

Sayeda was very active in obtaining the documents needed to start litigation procedures, and she was also eager to finish this matter quickly. Because of this, and with ECWR's help, the rule of divorce was issued after only 8 months, thus encouraging her to file another lawsuit for alimony.

Sayeda says, "Thanks to ECWR, I've learned how to combat my fear of going to the police station, I have learned how to claim my rights, how to deal with officials to obtain the documents needed for my lawsuit and I have actually learned how to seek out my rights. Many thanks again to ECWR's staff who helped me develop and become a more mature person."

The alimony Sayeda obtained amounted to L.E 250, after she had proved her husband's income, which was L.E 1000. Her husband's reaction was very harsh: he waited for her while she was going to the city council to cash the check, he beat her and took her daughter to remove her right to alimony.

Despite this, Sayeda says, "I have not been depressed. I filed a custody lawsuit for both my children, and the lawsuit was ruled in my favor as custodian of the children in my house.

"Despite the decree in my favour, my husband beat me, and broke the rules, keeping my children with him. After he took my daughter, I started working again teaching adults and training in sewing at "Mogamma El Monira El Gharbia". I put in a lot of effort, and was chosen as a manager of the

Mogamma (a nursery, workshop, women's club, and adult's classes) in addition to teaching.

Sayeda's successes at the Mogamma are as follows:

- Developing the nursery
- Starting recreation classes
- Gardening
- Establishing a women's club to train them in different skills
- Organizing educational seminars and inviting experts
- Making educational and recreational trips.

Sayeda didn't stop there. She also established a project for breeding ducks, by obtaining a loan for young graduates amounting to L.E 1000 with an interest rate of 11% for 18 months.

Despite the increasing rate of interest, after 18 months Sayeda was able to pay back the loan and the interest, thus winning the bank's trust. This helped her in two further projects (A duck farm and milking).

Sayeda says, "After I discovered ECWR, I found myself attracted to similar places. I tried to find out more about the National Council of Women (NCW) after I thought about nominating myself for the parliamentary elections of the year 2000. I decided to do this after I received the support of my community, as an attempt to defend women's rights, and to convince the rich parliamentarians that poor women can express the needs of poor people.

"I went to the NCW to identify how they could help women candidates for the elections. I was invited to a meeting where I met many women, particularly businesswomen."

Sayeda Bayoumy is simple women, yet she is remarkable. She intended to stand as a candidate in the parliamentary elections, but due to lack of money she couldn't afford to, and therefore decided to run in the local elections as the first step towards parliament.

Sayeda is one of the women targeted by ECWR to be trained in our Cadre School Program, which aims to prepare women leaders for the local elections of the year 2001.

c) Publications

In 2000, ECWR's Program of Legal Aid issued its annual report that covered all dimensions of the program and referred to some judicial cases. The program also issued 8 books through the A B Law series, targeting an audience that has not studied law. The series is characterized by simplicity and a language that is free of rigidity and complexity to be easily assimilated, yet does not sacrifice the basic legal concepts. The A B Law series aims at disseminating awareness of rights stipulated in Egyptian law. It focuses mainly on legal rights and how to use them. This series aims to reach out to all sectors of women through its circulation to those who duplicate information, i.e. those who are capable of understanding this series and acting as an intermediary, conducting this information through their work (for example adult education teachers, health and community workers). In addition, these books are distributed to a large number of NGOs.

2. PROGRAM OF SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S POLITICAL RIGHTS

The Program of Support for Women's Political Rights aims at:

1. Increasing the general participation of women in society.
2. Creating aware electoral blocs in certain electoral constituencies to discuss their representatives and negotiate their rights.
3. Educating women to depend on themselves through mechanisms of collective work.
4. Discovering new women leaders capable of taking part in electoral competitions to be involved in decision-making.



This is in addition to work on developing women's right to participate in political life, in particular, the right of voting and nomination. ECWR seeks to assist women in registering themselves in electoral and nomination lists and removing all obstacles before their registration. This is done through launching regular campaigns to register women in electoral lists in the months of registration (November – December – January). Besides this, awareness raising highlights the importance of the right of voting and how to exercise it.

In 2000, the program of Support for Women's Political Rights managed to hold 120 seminars attended by 2,400 participants, an average of 21 women per seminar. In 2000, the program registered 3000 women in the electoral lists in addition to the 24,114 women registered during campaigns throughout the past three years.

Within the framework of political training and workshops, the program

conducted 6 training courses on conversation skills in 2000. They were attended by 175 participants with an average of 25 participants per course. ECWR conducted 24 workshops with local coordinators to discuss the means of political participation of women in their work places in different governorates. The program also conducted sessions of discussion between women and their representatives in different councils, the people's assembly, the local council etc.

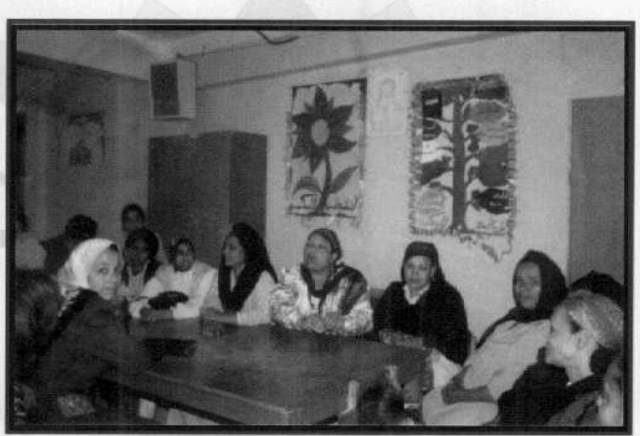
ECWR started its work in an experimental way in 1996. It was the subject of much sarcasm because of its tendency to empower women politically in a society that suffers from severe economic straits. However, ECWR adopted a method based on common action and linking political participation to daily needs regardless of the rigid legal phraseology. ECWR focused on making small achievements at the public level, yet important at the local level.



The experience started with a village in the north of Giza with 50 houses that had been lacking electricity for ten years. The local council refused to provide them with electricity. Thus, inhabitants of the village were exposed to great dangers in the darkness in the fields. Nobody was able to leave or enter the village at night. The argument between the local council and the villagers hinged on the fact that these houses were built beneath high pressure electricity cables so the inhabitants would be liable to great danger if they had electricity and furthermore that these houses were illegal.

The program was implemented with the village's women. After discussing the mechanism of collective action with them and how they can use their

legitimate peaceful means to exert pressure on the officials to acquire their rights, dialogue between the local council and women changed its course. Instead of talking about the illegality of constructing 50 houses in which 150 families live, questions were raised about permitting the construction of such illegal houses. They were not constructed overnight but over a period of months and years. Where have the officials been throughout all this period? Which is more dangerous: to live under high pressure cables or to become homeless and beg?



In the beginning, this was no easy task. Thus, poor women resorted to collective action. They organized themselves into small groups that went day after day to meet the local officials. Those women also made use of some peaceful tools to force the officials to meet them. They took their infants with them who made a noise in the place. Listening to the infants' mothers was the preferable alternative to making them wait and listening to the noise of their infants!

A few months later, the local authorities responded to their pleas and electricity was introduced to the village, thanks to the women and despite the many years the men had suffered with this problem.

Later, the experimental program was expanded to a more wide-ranging one. Employing the same mechanism of collective action, women at Dar el Salam were able to urge the officials to operate a governmental schools' complex, which had been suspended for years by the authority, using the money of owners of private schools.

In Badrasheen, south of Giza, women in some villages managed to obtain cover for drinking water tanks through conversations with the local councils. Despite scattered efforts, this experiment remains laboratory and

needs to be implemented on a large scale. Implementation of this experience also requires the contribution of all agencies concerned, in addition to the state's institutions to avoid the many obstacles that NGOs, like ECWR, cannot solve. These obstacles are as follows:

1. High numbers of women who are unregistered in birth records. There is a wide-spread belief in distant villages away from cities that women do not need official papers except for marriage. This is replaced by a certificate of age. It is a certificate made by doctors in villages to determine the age of women by their looks.(translator's note) This is in contrast to males whom parents are keen to register once born. Thus women are not registered in the birth records and cannot procure any official paper, e.g. electoral cards, without their birth certificates. In the light of results of a study conducted by ECWR of a sample of 100 families in Dar el Salam (where the percentage of new-comers is increasing), the number of women amounted to 264, 38% of whom do not carry IDs and 10% of whom were not registered in birth records.



2. Procedural impediments; According to the law on the exercise of political rights and its executive regulation, the prerequisite for obtaining an electoral card is to have an ID on which the place of residence is affiliated to the constituency where the electoral card is procured. This prerequisite has adverse effects on women, some of which are as follows:

a) As we have previously mentioned, a large percentage of women (this percentage differs from place to place) are not registered in birth records. Thus they can not procure an ID except through complicated procedures

to register themselves in birth records. Usually, women move from one region to another (from south to north) with their families. It is a highly difficult and socially complicated issue for women to return to their place of birth and register themselves in addition to the high costs they can not afford. Only when their original place of residence is proved can they procure an ID. Thus, those women cannot obtain an electoral card and vote except for in the south!

b) In the case where women have their IDs, the place of residence proved is usually the dwellings of the family or the husband. Moving to the husband's place of residence is not changed in the ID. This affects registration as women cannot be registered in their first place of residence proved in their IDs. To have the right to vote in their new place of residence, women should:

- Change their place of residence with the attendance of the husband in person and,
- Be registered in the electoral lists to which their first place of residence is affiliated.

In the case where women were proven to be registered in the electoral lists of their first place of residence, a request should be made to transfer their name from the electoral lists of the main constituency to that of the constituency of the area in which they reside, after ensuring the change in their place of residence. (This is followed by submission of a request to prove registration to the registration committee of the old place of residence to then be submitted to that of the new place of residence to register them).

In the case where women were not proven to be registered in the electoral lists, a request should be made to prove non-registration to the committee of the new place of residence, after ensuring the change in their place of residence. All of the above-mentioned factors make the participation of large numbers of women nearly impossible.

3. CADRE SCHOOL FOR WOMEN PROGRAM

The Cadre School for Women program started in 1996. The idea of implementing this program posed itself after the legislative elections in 1995. ECWR noticed that the total number of candidates amounted to 3,889 including only 89 women. The latter is a very low percentage that does not reflect, by any means, the realities of Egyptian women. Many questions posed themselves: Why did political parties not support the nomination of their female members? Is women's representation in Parliament a gender issue or a matter of development?



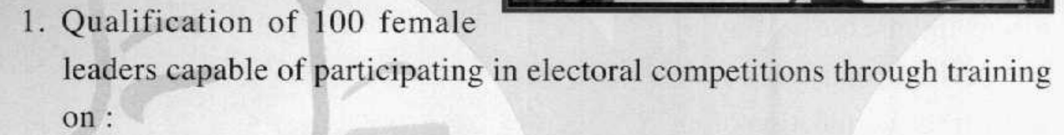
Discussions continued for two years with a large number of university professors, various partisan leaders and a number of public work activists to find the main reasons behind the decline of women's effective participation in the legislative, local or Shura elections. An agreement was reached that summed up the reasons as follows:



1. High cost of electoral campaigns.
2. Election rigging
3. Inability of women to run electoral campaigns as men do.

ECWR started to work on designing a program to take into consideration these factors. The program conducted a training

session in which 65 women were tentatively chosen. Another training course was held in which the number of women chosen was reduced to 25 leaders who had previously been nominated in various elections and were not able to win. These women also included members of women's committees in Egyptian political parties (15 parties).



The program's interim aims were as follows:

1. Qualification of 100 female leaders capable of participating in electoral competitions through training on :

a) Communication skills and skills of conversation and negotiation.

b) Preparation and administration of electoral campaigns

c) Basics of political work

2. Education of women cadres by teaching them general subjects and political and economic variables to help them understand developments that affect women and to make them demand that women's circumstances be changed through their understanding of societal conditions.



3. Exchange of expertise between women leaders, encouraging them to take collective action.

The program was put into force in 1999 with 25 female leaders representing six political parties (the NDP The ruling National Democratic Party (translator's note), the Nasserite Party, the Liberals' Party, the Work Party, Al-Wafd Party, the Integrity Party) to run for the 2000 People's Assembly elections. The program implemented a one-year comprehensive curriculum

for the same group. Female members of the cadre school faced many obstacles, as outlined above. Such obstacles were dealt with in a way that focused on developing the abilities of the candidate through sustainable and long-term work in her constituency in order to avoid the expense of attracting nominees. The candidate's presence and continued work would give her an advantage over candidates who spend money only a few months before elections.



As to rigging, another obstacle to women's participation, the program clarified that in the case of rigging, it is directed towards both male and female candidates. This can be overcome by the presence of delegates in the constituency and advocates trained in how to protect their votes in various committees. ECWR also trains its delegates in how to administer electoral competitions.

As to the final obstacle, relating to women's inability to run electoral campaigns, the Cadre School trains women in running electoral campaigns skillfully in a way that enables them to campaign in a methodological and practical way.

ECWR conducted 9 courses and workshops, in the framework of the program, for the same group. This comprehensive training package aims at polishing personal skills of members such as communication, conversation and negotiation skills. The second aim is to build a database of the most important political and legal themes that the political cadre has to be fully aware of.

4. ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES THROUGH REGISTRATION

During 1997, the World Bank held a workshop in Washington on "Gender in the Middle East." ECWR participated in the proceedings of this workshop. The workshop tackled discrimination against women that hinders their capacity to participate in development.

ECWR's involvement in the workshop tackled manifestations of discrimination against women whilst asserting that discrimination against women is natural and occurs in many countries. The seriousness of the problem lies in the fact that many women do not have access to basic services such as education, job opportunities, literacy classes or even to apply for small loans or pensions. Society does not acknowledge their existence because they lack birth certificates or IDs.

ECWR stated that this large sector of women falls outside the development plans set by the Egyptian government. This is not done intentionally but because such women are not registered in the official state's records. ECWR gave the following example in its contribution.

The Ministry of Health establishes health units and centers in a particular area. According to the official records, this area "X" of 100,000 inhabitants needs three health units, whereas in reality this area has some 50,000 inhabitants who are unregistered in its official records. This therefore adversely affects heath services in such an area.

The aforementioned point applies to low-income housing and other services made to citizens by different ministries. This contribution was the object of much controversy in the workshop at the time.

After starting to offer free legal services for women, the team discovered that many of those women were not registered in birth records. Thus they can not file a divorce case or any other legal claims that ECWR hopes to achieve for them. ECWR's team embarked on an attempt to find a solution to this problem.

In 1999, the International Bank organized an international contest entitled "Best Creative Ideas Worldwide." 12,000 institutions throughout the world took part in this contest. ECWR applied to this contest with the idea of this program, i.e. a national campaign to register women in official records and putting them on the state's map, a campaign which includes many partners. Such parties include NGOs, the General Authority for Adults' Education, the



Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Interior, the National Council for Women and ECWR as coordinator of this campaign. Moreover, a campaign to raise awareness of citizens in general, and women in particular, of the seriousness of the problem and of the importance of registering new-born babies should coincide with the campaign to register women in official records.

From 300 institutions throughout the world, and after many interviews by World Bank officials with these institutions, 44 ideas were chosen to be funded by the World Bank. ECWR was one of those institutions chosen. Thus, ECWR is considered the first NGO in the Middle East to be funded by the World Bank.

Legal considerations of the decision to choose ECWR included the fact the ECWR raised a seemingly very local idea but it drew attention to a universal issue that may be found in all developing states (e.g. Jordan, Bangladesh, Brazil and Morocco). A great number of citizens in the world are not included in international statistics and accounts which in turn hinders development in third world states.

Later, a delegation of the World Bank, represented by the Vice President

of the World Bank for the Middle East, Mr. John Loy Serebet, and accompanied by a delegation from the World Bank in Cairo, visited ECWR. The Al Wafd Party wrote a report, which was published on the World Bank web page, in which it stated under the title of "Best Creative Worldwide Ideas' Contest": "We have met a group, mostly women, whose ages range from 23 to 52. We were astonished by their eloquence. Many of them got married at the age of 12. They explained to us how they exerted a great effort to register themselves or their children because they wish to attend literacy classes but they couldn't without at least a birth certificate. It became clear how ECWR's coordinators deserve gratitude not only for assisting those women but also for relating their experiences. Asking one of those women about her husband's attitude, she replied proudly that her husband volunteered to attend ECWR's meetings. When we asked her how she knew of ECWR's services, she replied that ECWR's coordinators conducted meetings and literacy classes at the mosque and that they told each other about such classes."



As an example, a man who got married early was not able to procure an ID at this early age. When he attempted to obtain it, he had already had 6 children between the ages of 3 and 15, all unregistered. The man had to go through a long journey to health offices and civil records affiliated to the Ministry of the Interior and other public offices. ECWR's coordinators managed to help him and transferred him and his children to public records by procuring certificates for his children and an ID for the father.

In the light of the aforementioned situation, the program started in 2000 with the aim of achieving the following:

1. Training of local NGOs on how to raise women's awareness in poor areas of the importance of such papers,
2. Training on how to procure such papers,
3. Opening dialogue with all governmental and non-governmental concerned organizations on this problem and how to facilitate the procurement procedures of such papers to list women in public records to enable them to live in a humane way.



It is worth mentioning that the National Council for Women adopted the idea and chose to bear the expenses of women's IDs. Upon starting the program, a meeting was held with Mrs. Mervat El Telawy, secretary general of the National Council for Women, in which the suffering of a large number of women lacking birth certificates and IDs was discussed. This deprives them of basic services and affects their political participation and participation in all fields of life. Mrs. Teleawy responded immediately and announced that the National Council for Women would help poor women to attain various pensions. The National Council for Women would also bear the costs of obtaining women's IDs as a preparatory step for procuring electoral cards for them.

Registrars cooperated with ECWR as a result of continued discussions between them and ECWR's team. They began to understand the gravity of the problem. It is not merely a matter of a paper to be procured; it is a national issue relevant to the interests of women and their access to basic services, education and loans or pensions to be able to live in a modest way. The registrars began to understand that they are not ordinary public servants but

that they provide people with the most important service in their lives. The registrars displayed a great deal of cooperation with clients, in particular in Oseem, Embabah and Dokki.

Activities with these targeted NGOs actually started by conducting a workshop in which 36 NGOs from five governorates (Cairo-Giza-Dakahlia-Menia-Menoufiah) participated. The aim of the workshop was to discuss the plan of action with the concerned NGOs. Participants divided the program into three committees.

a) Committee of Public Officials

This aims to open channels of dialogue with officials at various levels to facilitate the procurement procedures and consider the problem of official papers a national issue.



A workshop was organized to discuss the development of the program and its transfer to a national campaign. The workshop included representatives of the participating NGOs and officials of civil records at the level of the five governorates and a member of the people's assembly for Oseem Constituency. The latter is one of the constituencies in the Cairo governorate where the problem is clear.

The workshop consisted of two plenary sessions with a break between them. The first session dealt with the problem and how it can be solved. A member of the people's assembly participated effectively in the discussion by expressing his readiness to take part and assist in the elimination of this

problem through the documents that are being bought to procure such papers. This is meant to save money for those who can not afford to buy those documents themselves and facilitate the procurement of such papers that prove their inclusion in the state's plans. The second session reviewed the tasks of the three committees for NGOs to join whichever committee they deem consistent with their activities to effectively achieve the program's goals.

b) The NGO Committee

This aims to raise awareness of the issue in NGOs, and train NGO staff on how to assist women in obtaining their official papers. The committee held a meeting in which it was agreed that intermediaries, i.e. people who would organize meetings to raise awareness of the importance of official papers, are to be trained. Intermediaries were divided into:



1. Intermediaries to deal with the targeted public
2. Intermediaries to oversee work

It was decided that five training courses be organized in the five governorates. Such training aims at:

1. Facing the problem
2. Attempting to overcome the problem.
3. Raising awareness of the seriousness of the problem
4. Practical training on the mechanisms of holding discussions and running

sessions to raise awareness about the problem.

These training courses were organized for NGOs in the governorates participating in the campaign (Cairo- Giza- Dakahlia-Menia and Menoufia).

NGOs participating in the training courses were chosen in accordance with the following criteria:



1. According to the need and to what extent the problem appears clearly in the scope of work of the NGOs
2. That these NGOs have worked in this field before
3. That raising awareness be part of the NGOs' activities
4. That these NGOs be organisations that have a grassroots base and the ability to reach out to the public
5. That such organisations provide services to poor rather than urban areas (where the public are in need of these services).

Forty NGOs per governorate (a total of 100 NGOs) participated in the training and continued the campaign thereafter.

c) Information and Dissemination Committee

It aims at raising general awareness of the seriousness of lacking official papers and the necessity of their procurement in addition to the necessity of registering new-born babies.

A poster was designed to clarify the importance of the ID for those who are illiterate. The poster included a famous character used by ECWR since its establishment as a symbol of the illiterate woman who wants to learn more and grow; El set (Mrs.) Nabwia. Nabwia is employed in the poster to



show other illiterate women that the ID is tremendously important for joining literacy classes.

200 posters were issued as a first edition. They were followed by 3000 posters as a second edition. ECWR distributed the poster to NGOs suffering from the problem and that are striving to overcome it, other NGOs cooperating with ECWR and other agencies concerned such as the General Authority for Adult's Education.

NGOs that participated in planning and running the program:

- Future Eve's Society
- Family planning Society, Mansoura
- Society of Developing the Egyptian Countryside, Giza
- Society of Protection of the Environment against Pollution
- League of Arab women, Menia
- Women's Society for Improvement of health, Dakahlia
- Society of Muslim Female Youth, Mansoura
- Red Crescent society, Dakahlia
- Society of Developing the Local Community, Menoufia
- Society of Islamic Awareness, Menoufia
- Women's Hanaa Society, Cairo
- Society of Street Sellers of food, Menia
- Wafaa El Neil Society, Mansoura
- The Anglican Coptic Authority, Cairo
- The Scientific Society for Development of the Family, Giza
- Women's Medical Society, Cairo

- Mostaf Kamel Society for Social Development
- Society of Upgrading and Developing Women, Cairo
- Family Planning Society, Menoufia
- Bashayer Center, Cairo
- The Egyptian Association for Development of Communities, Cairo
- Society for Developing the Local Community, Dakahlia
- Bishopric of Services, Cairo
- The Islamic Center, Haram, Giza
- Family Planning society, Giza
- Upper Egypt society, Cairo
- The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights
- Karetas Egypt, Cairo.

5. NGO CAPACITY BUILDING

ECWR developed a NGO Capacity Building Program according to the role that NGOs must play in society. This role has been particularly significant since the nineties due to new economic policies (Market economy) which have made the activation of the third sector, in particular NGOs, a necessity.

From ECWR's viewpoint, NGO capacity building means that the program effectively develops and upgrades the performance of NGOs in the framework of cultural, political and economic capabilities. It also means that NGOs are able to employ their resources to achieve sustainability in the field of civil work.

The idea of this program started when ECWR's team noticed the real desire of some NGOs to work in various fields of development although the staff of such NGOs lacked training to undertake their missions. Thus, ECWR decided to improve the capacity of NGO staff.

This program has been developed to achieve the following aims:

1. Upgrading the capacities of NGOs, in particular, small NGOs and encouraging society in general and women in particular to join their membership.
2. Changing the traditional outlook towards the role of women in NGOs and their involvement in all development programs.
3. Encouraging NGOs to adopt a creative approach in the field of development, analysing needs, developing plans and implementing them.
4. Focusing on disseminating values of volunteering and participation.
5. Encouraging NGOs to establish a communication network to exchange experiences and information.

In this program, ECWR depends on a comprehensive training program for a specified number of NGOs. This program is also repeated with other NGOs.

Finally, ECWR trains in the following skills:

- Carrying out a needs analysis
- Designing, implementing and evaluating results of projects
- Skills of communication and holding conversations
- Attracting volunteers
- Strategic planning and running electoral campaigns.
- Skills of negotiation
- Crisis management.

All of ECWR's publications, whether they are booklets, periodicals or reports, reflect the center's philosophy of making concepts related to women's rights accessible to both society in general and to women in particular, through the use of simplified terms. Furthermore, a number of these publications are based on the practical experience of ECWR through our fieldwork with women. In order to raise awareness of women's issues by means of ECWR's practical experience, we have expanded our distribution, aiming to cover everywhere women gather.

A. Publications of SPRW Program

1) Series of Booklets "Speeches in Politics"

The SPRW Program basically works to develop and to activate women's role in political participation. Therefore, all of the program's issues are targeted to help women understand the main principles of political work through a series of booklets entitled "Speeches in politics". This title was specifically selected to avoid the term 'policy' which is the source of debate and can therefore form a barrier for many women.

In order to increase women's confidence when reading about political issues, we used bright colors, cartoon drawings and simple language. Five parts of the series "Speeches in Politics" were issued as follows:

(a) "Civil Society"

In light of global changes and the evident role of civil society, whether on a national or international level, this part discusses the beginnings and development of civil society, the activities and objectives of its organizations

and the challenges of self-development.



(b) "Women and Political life"

This part presents forms of women's participation in political life, describes what political participation is, the historical development of women's political participation and aspects of Egyptian women's participation in political life.

It also discusses women's role in formulating suggestions for laws and their role in raising queries and questions for debates.

The booklet then illustrates activities of women members of parliament, the level of women's participation in local councils and parties, facts about and obstacles to women's political participation in Egypt, and finally suggestions on how women's political participation may be enhanced.

(c) "Political Parties in Egypt"

This booklet explains in simple terms, the early beginning of political parties in Egypt, the relation between the 1952 revolution and political parties, and the beginning of multi-party politics in the mid seventies.

It explains the existing political parties in Egypt. They are the National Democratic Party (governing party), Al Wafd Algadid Party, Al Tagamoa Progressive Party, The Socialist Labor Party, Al Ahrar Party, the Arab Democratic Naser Party and other small parties.

(d) "The State" (Reprint)

Although we were concerned that this series of booklets " Speeches in Politics" might not attract attention, due to its simplicity it was met with unexpected interest. Therefore, we decided to reprint some parts, especially the first part entitled " The State".

This part explains the concept of the state and its three authorities :

The legislative authority (People Assembly)





- The executive authority (The Government)

authority

different powers of the state; political powers, social powers, military powers, security and penalty powers.

(e) "The Law" (Reprint)

This is third part of the same series of booklets issued by the SPRW program. This part briefly discusses the definition of law and the various sections of the

law, general international law, national law, constitutional law, civil law, commercial law, marine law, air law, agricultural law, labor law, law of civil and commercial pleadings, and international private law.

The third section of this booklet explains the definition of citizenship, passing laws, who is responsible for implementing laws and the relation between law and society.

2) Series of booklets "Stories of Nabaweya"

This focuses on the main concern of the program, to increase political awareness of a large sector of people who are often neglected. These are the people who can hardly read, and politically are known as 'the unlimited majority' (exceeding 50% of the population). So, this series of booklets was issued for them in particular.

It is a series of booklets explaining some of the main political concepts by means of colorful cartoon drawings and simple stories about important political issues such as electoral cards, electoral programs, public referendums and the people's assembly.

This series was met with great success in terms of its accuracy and efficacy in explaining concepts. We used a popular character of a woman, 'Nabaweya', who is very common in our targeted group. She is illiterate and seeks to develop herself by collecting information.

Throughout this year, the following parts of this series of booklets were issued:

1. Part No. 4 : " Nabaweya and Parliament Elections"

This part includes an explanation of the Egyptian parliament, and the important role it plays.

In this part, Nabaweya's skills have developed and she is better able to discuss issues using the information she has learnt throughout the last parts.

At the end of this part, Nabaweya became completely convinced of the importance of parliament. She would therefore not only participate by voting, but would also seek to stand for parliament herself.

2. Part No. 1 (Reprint): "Nabaweya and Electoral Cards"

In preparation for the Egyptian parliamentary elections that took place in November and December 2000, we reprinted the first part of this series of booklets, which discusses the importance of the electoral card, how to obtain it and how to use it.



B. Publications of the Legal Aid Program
- Series of booklets " A-B Law"

ECWR's lawyers and some other jurists prepared this series of booklets, the title refering to the alphabetical listing of women's legal rights. We should bear in mind the increasing percentage of ignorance of the law which might reach as high 75%, even among women who are educated.

Throughout this series of booklets, ECWR explains all legal rights by using very simple language, and cartoon drawings to overcome the rigidity of legal expressions.

"A-B Law" booklets cover women's legal rights and duties in the Family

Code (marriage, divorce, alimony, khole and custody), and some other affairs related to women as well. The program's staff then noticed that there are many other legal problems women might face as a citizen in society, such as signing an uncovered cheque when purchasing expensive goods by installments. There are also some civil problems women might face for example as a renter or a house owner, or as an employee in the private or public sector.

Therefore, the parts of "A-B law" that simplify the legal rights and duties of women in order to inform them about their legal status reduce the likelihood of women losing their legal rights.

The books also indicate some legal documents needed in different situations to enable women to follow up their own lawsuits, by themselves or with their lawyers.

Fourteen parts of "A-B Law" series of booklets were issued, eleven parts of them reprinted in the year 2000.

1. Part 7 " Undocumented marriage"

This part was issued at the time undocumented marriage became a common phenomenon in Egyptian society. In order to avoid misunderstanding and to correct information women have on this kind of marriage, we issued this booklet.

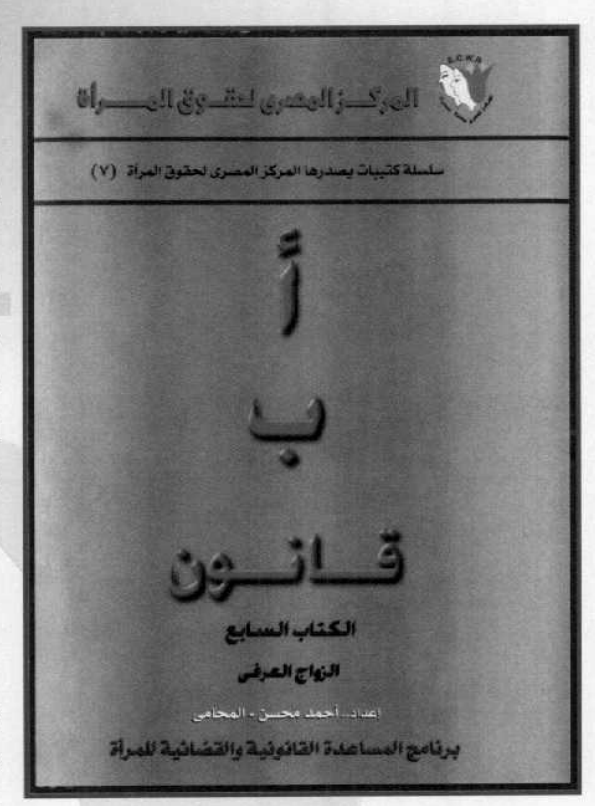
It explains the following:

- Definition of undocumented marriage;
- Reasons of dissemination;
- Dimensions;
- The terms which must be observed and the consequences of neglecting one of these terms in the marriage contract;
- Legal ways to prove it;
- Both parties (men's and women's) rights and duties in undocumented marriage;

- The consequences of denying this marriage;
- Kinship of children;

in the case of undocumented marriage.

Finally, the book covers some legal problems related to undocumented marriage, and also indicates some examples of legal papers needed to follow up lawsuits.



2. Part 8, "El khole"

This part was issued after the law of litigation procedures in the Family Code was passes that is known as 'El Khole' law.

It explains El Khole legally and legislatively and gives the reasons for passing this law. It also explains the procedures to file Khole lawsuits, the difference between divorce and Khole and ways to appeal the verdicts ruled in El Khole cases.

Various other legal issues were also discussed in this booklet, such as the disputation on wife's right to travel, the option of a lawyer's signature on lawsuit documents before the partial court, divorce in the case of undocumented marriage and proving this divorce, and the Family Court.

3. Part 9, "Rental Law"

The Legal Aid program mainly aims to spread legal awareness among women. This part was issued to explain in detail the rental law issued in

1996 and known as " The New Rental Law", the difference between this and other rental laws, and the changes within them.

The booklet gives a definition of a rental contract, its terms, and the obligations of both the renter and owner, ways to prove rental contracts, and finally the expiration of a rental contract.

4. Part 9, "Rent of places for non-housing purposes"

This part explains the reasons for amendments to articles of the rental law concerning this point, specifying the places covered by this law and those not covered.

It also explains cases of legal extension for places rented for non-housing purposes, legal increases in the rent and the consequences of not paying this increase.

5. Part 10, "Labor Law"

This explains the labor law for Egyptian women. It gives a definition of labor law, the difference between labor dependence connection and subordination, forms of wages and attachments, salaries, periodical rewards, rewards for high sales, bonuses…etc.

This part also explains rules for wage settlement, and the minimum range of wages. Temporary and contingent labor contracts are also explained, and the penalty of breaching rules of wages in labor law.

6. Part 12, "Individual Work Contract"

It describes in detail the individual work contract, its terms, how to prove it, the obligations of both the employee and employer, disciplinary penalties, rules of women's employment, and finally, the expiration of a work

contract.

" Custody"



Regarding the great benefits of the "A-B Law" series of booklets, and to meet the increasing demand of many NGOs we cooperate with, we reprinted some parts, which aroused great interest in our targeted groups.

Part 2 "Custody" is one of these parts reprinted. It explains what custody is, reasons for it, who has this right, the stipulation that a female custodian must be available, the age of custody and fees.

This part gives some examples of lawsuit documents in the following cases:

- How a mother can apply to have custody of her child;
- An application for the child to remain with his female custodian beyond the full age of custody;
- An application, in the case of recession, for the abandonment of custody;
- An application for the mother to choose whether to keep the custody of her child without a custody fee, or to turn him over to a custody volunteer.

The second section of the same booklet discusses briefly the issue of visiting rights to children in custody of another party, who has the right to visit those children, how to resort to the court to obtain this right, and applying rules of visitation.

Finally, the booklet illustrates a form of a lawsuit filed by a grandmother

to see her granddaughter and another form of a lawsuit to transfer custody to the next in line due to the party not complying with the rule of visitation.

8. Part 3 (Reprint), "Guardianship procedures"

This part was issued by the Legal Aid Program in two sections. The first describes declaration of death, declaration of inheritance, and the guardian's decree, illustrating some legal forms of these documents in different cases.

The second section of this book explains guardianship of the money of minors (under age), guardians and sponsors, and the guardian decree.

Forms of application are also illustrated, one for appointing a guardian and another one for dismissing a guardian.

9. Part 4 (Reprint), "Financial Rights of Wives"

This explains the wife's alimony, types of alimony and how to calculate it, cases of increasing alimony, cases of dropping alimony, how to obtain alimony from the husband and filing a lawsuit of imprisonment due to refusal to pay this alimony and the documents needed in this case.

This part also explains some of the wife's financial rights toward her husband such as the dowry, list of furniture etc.

The book gives examples of some forms of alimony lawsuits (its three kinds), the lawsuit of increasing alimony, the lawsuit of alimony for a past period including a demand for a temporary alimony, the lawsuit of deferred dowry, the lawsuit of wife's alimony, and the lawsuit of delivery costs.

10. Part 5 (Reprint), "Christian Women's Rights"

The Egyptian family code is valid for all Egyptians, but there are still some affairs related to Christian legislation, which necessitates the issue of

a part of same series of booklets "A-B Law" for Christian women in order to realize the full benefits of the whole series.

This book provides Christian women with a simple explanation of her legal rights in the Family Code. It describes engagement, marriage, how Christians get married outside of Egypt, how to register the marriage contract officially, and reasons for breaking the marriage contract. Finally, rules of alimony in the Family Code for Christian women are detailed.

11. Part 6 (Reprint), " Law of Checks"



This part was issued after ECWR discovered that there are many lawsuits against women for signing uncovered checks, especially those used to pay in instalments for expensive goods.

It describes what a check is, terms for using checks correctly, the difference between a check and any other paper money, the crime of issuing an uncovered cheque, and the penalty for this under Egyptian law.

C. Publications of "Women's Cadre School" Program

The Cadre School Program is objectively intended to build political cadres by providing women with an integrated methodology to deal with society's issues and events, in addition to informing them about organizations in society, their specialization, and how they carry out their work.

It is true that the numbers of women leaders we work with in the program are still limited, as there are hundreds of women leaders we are still unable to access due to the limited human and financial resources of the program.

Therefore, it was necessary for the program to disseminate issues in print form to send to women leaders wherever they are in Egypt in order to maximise those who benefit from this program. As a result of the program, two women members won seats in parliament in the year 2000

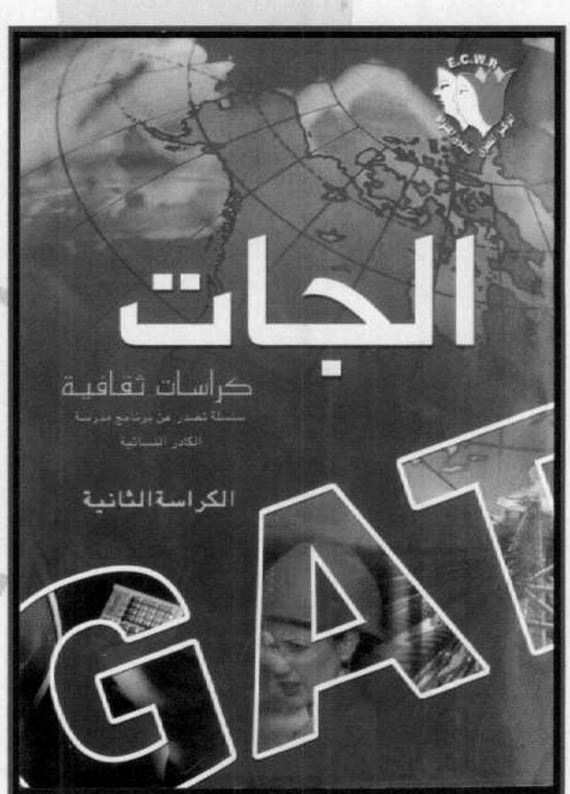
"Cultural Notebooks" is the name of the series of booklets issued by the Women's Cadre School program. Six parts of this series were issued as follows:

1. "Citizenship"

This part explains the concept of citizenship, its historical dimensions, rights and duties related to citizenship, and legal aspects of citizenship.

The booklet also describes the political concept of citizenship, and insufficient citizenship, such as discrimination between citizens on the basis of gender or religion.

2. "GATT"



This book explains the General Agreement for Trade and Tariffs "GATT", its main aims, the phases it passed through since 1947, and all other related conventions. It also explains the principals and functions of GATT such as trade liberalization, equality, and setting regulations for commercial dealings. The positive and negative effects of GATT on developing countries, and on Egypt in particular, are

also explained.



3. "The People's Assembly"

This booklet gives a definition of the Egyptian People's Assembly, its structure, period and location, in addition to the parliament authorities, specialization, terms of membership, procedures of candidates for parliament membership, rights and duties of members and opportunities for presenting projects of laws.

4. "Gender"

This explains the concept of gender, which refers to the relation between men and women on a social, cultural and political basis.

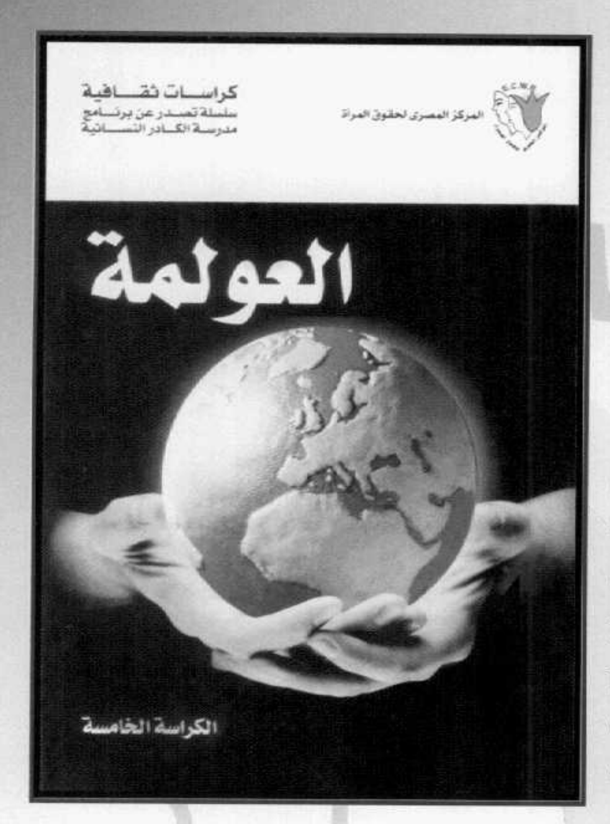
The booklet describes the situation of Egyptian women which is falling behind that of men, whether at home, work, or in society in general.

The booklet answers many questions concerning Egyptian women such as:

- What is the difference between gender and sex?
- Is it true that women's capabilities are less than that of men?
- What does discrimination against women mean?

5. "Globalization"

This explains what is meant by globalization, its historical beginnings,



and its effects on the third world, including Egypt. This part of "Cultural Notebooks" also presents different points of view on globalization.

6. "Voting Rights"

This booklet gives a definition of electoral cards and their importance, the significance of local councils, the importance for the general public of participating in local council elections and parliamentary elections.

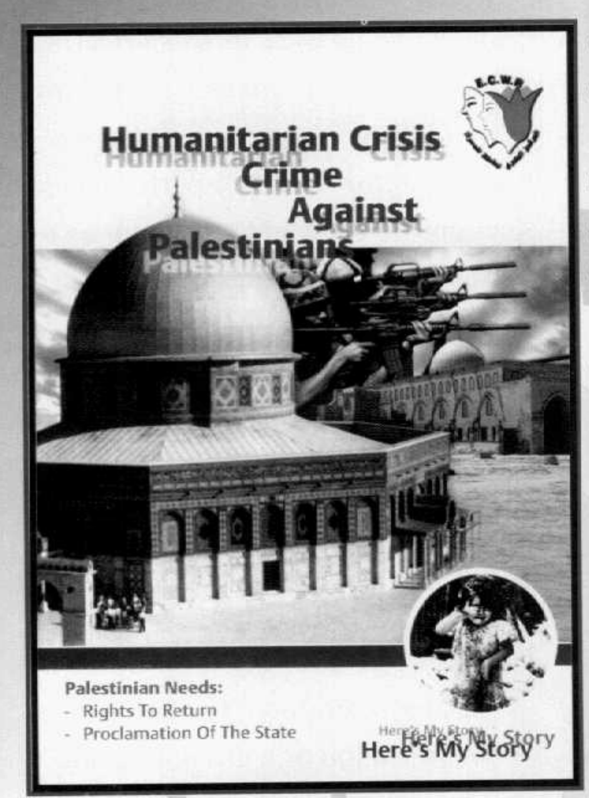
The booklet also describes electoral circles and schedules and related problems, and explains the obligations of exercising the right to vote.

D. General publications

1. The Crime Against Palestine: "Humanitarian Disaster"

This was produced in preparation for the international conference entitled "International Movement for Democracy", which took place in Brazil in November 2000, with the attendance of six hundred organizations and international political figures. The conference synchronized the increasingly violent practices of Zionism against Palestinians.

A photographic book in English was prepared by Suheir Azzouni-Mahshi, Women's Affairs Technical Committee, and printed and distributed by ECWR. The book shows photographs of the savage practices of the Israeli

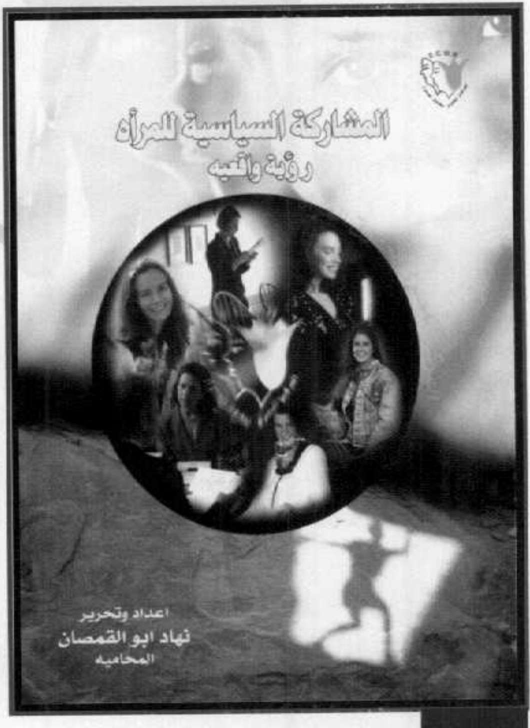


occupation against Palestinian civilians, especially children.

It also reveals some of the sarcastic comments from Israeli statements and their vindication for the killing process.

The response of Palestinian mothers to the Swedish Queen, who declared in one of her statements that she condemns them for letting their children be a target for killing, is also given.

The book was printed with natural colors to give a more profound expression of events. book was distributed widely at the conference, whilst also maintaining, within the framework of a pressure group, that condemnation of Israeli practices in Palestine should be included in the final recommendations of the conference.



2. " Women's Political Participation – A Practical View"

This book was issued within the framework of ECWR's concern to urge women towards political participation, whether as voters or as candidates.

In this booklet ECWR tried to document and analyze factors affecting women participation, and the role of the organizations concerned in supporting their participation.

This book also covers ECWR's aim to monitor women's performance at all levels of elections. For the local elections of 1997 and the elections to renew half of El Shura council in 1998,follow up and monitoring was carried out by ECWR. Monitoring reports from these elections were collected as a document for the usage of those concerned.



3. " Women's Studies"

This booklet was issued within the framework of ECWR's aim to document women's international movements and related literature. The booklet is a translation of a group of studies and articles concerning gender issues, which is considered unfamiliar to Egyptian and Arab society.

Due to the lack of this kind of literature in Arab libraries, ECWR attempted to translate them to allow people to benefit from them and to start discussions as activists instead of being isolated from international changes.

4. "ECWR's Programs and Activities"

In order to help all bodies concerned, especially NGOs, to develop a closer relationship with the center, and to enable exchange of expertise, this

booklet was issued to include all the basic information on ECWR, for example the circumstances of its work, objectives, programs, activities, and all activities of programs carried out during 1997 to 1999.

5. Newsletter "Women"

This is a non-periodical newsletter which includes all the mechanisms of ECWR's activities and the programs of ECWR. It also documents the status of Egyptian women and some other organizations concerned, locally and internationally.

Throughout this year 3 parts of "Women" newsletter were issued. Two of them are in Arabic and the third one is in English.

ECWR's Echo

All media sets, audiovisual and press releases are not separate from the activities and programs that ECWR carries out as part of the struggle to adopt women's issues. With these we try to achieve practical solutions to women's problems.

Some newspapers and magazines have published articles about ECWR's activities. Some of them are:

1. Al Gomhoreya Newspaper
2. Al Ahram Newspaper
3. Akidaty
4. Al Akhbar
5. Rosalyousef Magazine
6. Al Ahrar newsletter
7. Al Mansoura Voice
8. Al Seyasi Almisry
9. Al Ahram Weekly
10. Sabah El Kheir Magazine

ECWR's activities were also fortunate to have the coverage of different T.V programs and channels such as:

- Donya program, Egyptian T.V, Channel 1
- Bent El Nil program, Egyptian T.V, channel 3
- Women and Society program, Egyptian T.V, channel 4
- If We Stopped Dreaming.., Egyptian T.V, channel 1
- She program, Egyptian T.V, Channel 2
- For or Against program, Satellite channel, Qatar T.V